

Building Blocks

A PUBLICATION OF FIRST 5 CALIFORNIA

VOLUME 2, ISSUE 4



First 5 California Announces \$100 Million Toward Voluntary Preschool for All

On July 22, First 5 California unanimously voted to invest \$100 million in voluntary Preschool for All, spearheading efforts to ensure that the state's estimated 3.5 million children under age 5 have equal access to quality preschool programs. First 5 California's Preschool for All grantmaking program is regarded as one of the largest financial commitments of its kind to date.

As the historic vote was announced by Chairman Rob Reiner at the State Capitol, an ovation emerged from the audience of children's activists, educators, preschool providers and other advocates who were present.

Jane I. Henderson, executive director, First 5 California, said Preschool for All is intended to correct a severe shortage in the government financing of early childhood development



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programs. "First 5 California is responding to statistics that show for every dollar invested in early learning programs, the public saves \$6.09 in crime, welfare dependency and special education costs," said Henderson.

The \$100 million investment is an important first step toward implementing Preschool for All as described in the California Legislature's Master Plan for Education. The initiative aims to increase the number of high-quality preschool spaces in the state, while serving as learning labs that can inform the development and implementation of a statewide system. The ultimate goal is to create an education system in California that begins at preschool and continues through grade 12.

After addressing questions from reporters in Sacramento, Reiner headed for San Mateo County to conduct a news conference officially announcing the Preschool for All Initiative. The press conference was held at Turnbull Learning Academy, which leads three First 5 programs on campus. First 5 San Mateo County has committed \$10 million over the next 10 years to universal preschool programs.

Preschool for All Statewide Summit

The Universal Preschool Statewide Summit held in conjunction with this year's All County Conference was kicked off with a standing room-only event in Orange County, California. More than 300 participants convened to share strategies and hear "lessons learned" from other states that will help them with implementing voluntary Preschool for All in California. An animated dialogue about the diverse strategies that have worked successfully in Southern, Eastern and Midwestern states was the start of a productive two days. The program featured experienced big thinkers, day-to-day practitioners and passionate advocates for quality early childhood education. Attendees included state and county First 5 Commissioners and Commission staff, educators at the early childhood, K-12, college and university levels, private foundation staff, community-based trainers, resource and referral agency staff, researchers and parents.

The event spotlighted the many activities already taking place in California around expanding young children's access to high-quality preschool education. Some of the highlights are:

- First 5 California and the California Master Plan for Education established voluntary preschool for all 3- and 4-year-olds as one of its top priorities.
- The Children, Families and Communities Program of The David and Lucile Packard Foundation announced the central goal of achieving and implementing preschool for all 3- and 4-year-olds in California within 10 years.
- Los Angeles, San Mateo and Alpine Counties are planning to implement locally based universal preschool systems of their own.
- The California Legislature is considering Assembly Bill 56 (Steinberg, Liu, Chan, Daucher), which seeks to phase in voluntary access to universal preschool, beginning in communities with low-performing schools and expanding statewide by 2014.

"The time for universal preschool in California has come," announced First 5 California Executive Director Jane Henderson as she opened the Summit. "We

have a lot of energy around this issue, and we know we have a lot to learn. We need to think big, think comprehensively, proceed incrementally, and plan now," she added.

Margaret Blood, president of Strategies for Children, Inc., gave the keynote presentation on the Early Education for All campaign in Massachusetts. In addition, a half-day session offered strategies for ensuring a skilled and stable preschool workforce and a series of panel presentations showcased the experiences of six states and several California counties pursuing universal preschool.

"The time for universal preschool in California has come . . . we need to think big, think comprehensively, proceed incrementally, and plan now."

-Jane Henderson, executive director, First 5 California

Diverse States Advance Preschool for All Through Legislation and Leadership

Although the participating states advanced their goals for universal preschool programs in their own distinct political environment, common experiences and challenges emerged. A snapshot of some of those successes and challenges appears below.

Florida

In November 2002, voters passed the Florida Early Childhood Initiative by a margin of 60 percent to 40 percent. Polling showed very broad support. Even among the group of voters who were least supportive of the measure, non-Hispanic

white Republicans, it passed by 52 percent. Implementation will begin with the 2005 school year.

Georgia

The Georgia Prekindergarten Program was created in 1993 with the leadership of then-Governor Zell Miller, along with the availability of funds from the Georgia Lottery for Education. Operating 6.5 hours per day for 160 days (the public school year), the program currently serves 65,000 children, either in public school settings or in community-based child care centers, reaching a higher proportion of 4-year-olds (70 percent) than does any other state with high-quality preschool learning experiences.

Illinois

In the fall of 2000, an Early Childhood Education Assembly convened by former Illinois Governor George Ryan called universal preschool for 3- to 5-year-olds the state's highest educational priority. In February 2002, a Task Force on Universal Access to Preschool delivered a plan to the Governor and Legislature, which approved \$5.2 million for universal preschool. Rollout has been delayed by the state's budget crisis, however, and in November 2002, Illinois voters elected a new governor. Meanwhile, a variety of programs now serve 139,000 of the state's 367,000 preschoolers ages 3 and 4. According to the state universal preschool plan, full implementation would ultimately serve 202,000 children.

Massachusetts

For the last two years, Strategies for Children, Inc., a Massachusetts children's advocacy group, has conducted extensive polling, held a series of 13 local meetings with the early care and education community statewide and met with political, philanthropic, business and labor leaders. These efforts culminated in the introduction of the Early Education for All Bill. The legislative proposal mandates an accessible system of high-quality services for children ages 0 to 5.

New Jersey

New Jersey has been implementing universal preschool for several years, as a result of a series of state Supreme Court

Draws Hundreds to Share and Learn

rulings mandating preschool for 3- and 4-year-olds in the state's 30 poorest school districts. The ruling is based on the constitutional principle of a "thorough and efficient education" and an investigation that found major inequities among school districts in the educational opportunities they provide. Currently, about 80 percent of the eligible 4-year-olds in these districts are served in both school-based and community-based settings.

New York

New York has advanced the preschool for all movement through grassroots and legislative advocacy. In New York, legislation passed in 1997 calling for access to early education for all 4-year-olds. The legislation was not attached to an implementation plan and workforce issues have been an additional challenge. While the program is not universal (it serves approximately 60,000 children statewide), implementation issues have forced the early education community to collaborate in new ways.

Looking Forward: Improved Workforce Development, Collaboration and Evaluation

Panelists shared nuts and bolts strategies and "lessons learned" about their own implementation experiences. The importance of a well-educated and compensated workforce, the significance of collaborative partnerships involving diverse stakeholders and the need for research that supports the benefits of preschool for all programs were among the most pressing themes that emerged. Other recommendations included the following:

- Designing a universal preschool campaign to serve all 3- and 4-year-olds builds a larger constituency for funding and support.
- Phasing the program in gradually offers the opportunity to make important and needed changes before the program is fully rolled-out.
- Teacher certification is a major theme throughout the states that are implementing preschool for all. The credentialed teacher is the across-the-board standard that creates parity with the K-12 system.
- Teacher certification should connect preschool with the early elementary grades. This has been key in getting

"Our messages to California are the following: Keep the process fluid in the beginning, the better to learn from experience. Develop mechanisms for ongoing education and participation of the partners: embrace the resources of each of the partners, and establish incentives for all of them to participate. And finally: develop a realistic phase-in strategy, but keep your longer-term vision clear."

-Nancy Kolben, executive director, Child Care, Inc.

the higher education system's attention and support. In addition, states have often designed their teacher credentials to overlap somewhat. In New York, for example, credentials cover birth to grade 2, grades 1 to 6 and grades 5 to 9.

- Increased preschool teacher standards cannot be met unless the state's higher education system offers opportunities for aspiring teachers to meet those standards.
- The leadership of New Jersey's advocacy and early education communities



has played a critical role in the success of New Jersey's growing preschool effort. The coalition process developed and mobilized a diverse constituency that was willing to step forward, develop leadership skills and take

a long view of education reform in New Jersey. The coalition ensured its credibility by including research partners as coalition members.

- Developing a system that will be accountable and able to measure results and prove progress is essential. An At-Risk Study conducted by Georgia's Office of School Readiness (1992-1995) found that in kindergarten, pre-K children surpassed the comparison group on academic, physical, self-help, communication and social measures, and that in first grade, they scored higher on math problem-solving, reading comprehension and other academic measures.

First 5 California and First 5 County Commissions Lead the Way in California

While diverse partners are beginning to plan a statewide Preschool for All effort, three California counties—Los Angeles, Alpine and San Mateo—are taking the lead in developing local universal preschool models of their own (for more information about county efforts, please refer to Volume 2, Issue 3 of *Building Blocks*). A recent survey conducted by the American Institute for Research (AIR) showed that many other County Commissions are supporting Preschool for All in a variety of ways.

First 5 California is developing a "Preschool For All: Step-by-Step" Planning Guide to help planners and advocates review the options for phasing in access to a system of Preschool for All, with a special focus on local implementation. The guide

Child and family advocates throughout the state believe that within five to 10 years, every 3- or 4-year-old in California, regardless of income, should be guaranteed the opportunity to attend, at no cost, a parent-friendly, culturally appropriate preschool.



Public Support for Preschool Grows in California

Since our last issue of *Building Blocks*, which highlighted high-quality preschool programs and county universal preschool initiatives, the momentum among state and local policymakers toward making preschool available to all young Californians statewide has continued to build. In April, several hundred educators, planners, state and local officials and early education advocates gathered for California's first statewide summit on Preschool for All, as described in our article on page 2. Last December, state lawmakers introduced a bill to implement the early childhood-related provisions of California's bold new Master Plan for Education.

As the provisions in the bill suggest, expanding access to preschool is one key facet of a comprehensive agenda for young children and their families founded on what we now know about how young children grow and learn throughout the developmental period of early childhood. But reconfiguring our education, health and other public systems to reflect that understanding, including: supporting expecting and new parents; providing for early and periodic screenings and assessments for young children; improving the quality of child care, health and mental health care

for infants and toddlers; bringing families, schools, and neighborhoods together on behalf of young children; making preschool available to every child; and continuing to provide support for children and their families through the primary grades is a big, costly job that will require a long-term political commitment from both policymakers and the public.

In the face of an ongoing state budget crisis, diverse partners will work in strategic phases to develop broad public understanding and support for voluntary Preschool for All and related programs. Child and family advocates throughout the state believe that within five to 10 years, every 3- or 4-year-old in California, regardless of income, should be guaranteed the opportunity to attend, at no cost, a parent-friendly, culturally appropriate preschool that is staffed by well-trained early childhood educators and integrated with the K-12 system.

Public Opinion Research: Californians Are Getting Ready for Preschool

First 5 California's decision to focus on voluntary Preschool for All is based not

only on the large body of research documenting the lasting benefits for children who attend high-quality programs, but also on an extensive inquiry into the needs, concerns and ideas of California parents, opinion leaders and the general public. Parents in particular are not only key informants and a key audience in this effort, but also essential partners, both as their children's first teachers and ultimately as advocates for children in the wider society.

Californians value early learning.

Three recent surveys and focus groups commissioned by First 5 California show that although Californians have not been intensely focused on the needs of young children and do not readily connect with the phrase "school readiness," parents and the public do respond very favorably to the notion of early learning and to the idea that all young children should have everything they need in order to succeed in school. Among the elements of a comprehensive agenda to meet those needs, Californians are most supportive of the idea of universal preschool.

First 5 California's first study, carried out in the fall of 2001 by the Field Research

Corporation and the UCLA Center for Healthier Children, Families and Communities, looked at parents' and public views on early childhood development, child care and early childhood education, along with family activities and child care arrangements. Surveyors spoke by phone in six languages with 2,000 members of the general public and more than 4,800 parents of children from infancy to age 5. A majority of all parents in the survey, but especially those with low incomes, felt that preschool is very important for their children's development and later success in school. This sentiment was strongest among Latino and African American parents. While a majority of the 60 percent of parents who depend on child care said they were satisfied with the child care arrangements for their own children, they expressed some distrust of child care generally. Less educated and lower-income parents were the least likely to recommend their own child's care to a friend or co-worker. Consistent with these findings, low-income and immigrant parents were also most concerned with learning activities as an attribute of child care. Among parents of 3- to 5-year-olds generally, those whose children were in preschool indicated the highest satisfaction with their children's learning activities.

Californians believe preschool can strengthen the K-12 system.

In a second study in the summer of 2002, Hart Research Associates conducted a series of 20 focus groups with a diverse group of Californians around the state to further explore people's responses to the concept of school readiness. Researchers found that a majority of parents did not know what was meant by the term "school readiness." In addition, issues related to young children were not initially top-of-mind for participants, who instead cited crime and violence, traffic, jobs, affordable housing and K-12 education as key concerns. Asked to focus in on education, however, participants showed a sophisticated understanding of the importance of early learning if children are to succeed in today's environment and expressed the view that the current educational system is out of step

with today's changing social patterns and competitive global economy. Participants pointed out that those who can afford preschool provide this opportunity to their children because they know it helps, but not all parents can afford it. Remarkably, when invited to re-think the K-12 system from the ground up to make it more appropriate for today's world, most people recommended starting school at age 3 or 4, in effect, creating a system that begins with Preschool for All.



Californians support a comprehensive early childhood agenda, but put preschool first. Asked to consider First 5 California's broader school readiness agenda for children from birth to 5-years-old, including preschool or pre-kindergarten programs, prenatal and pediatric care, parent education on brain development, high-quality child care, nutrition support and parental leave policies, participants were supportive of all the elements of the program individually, but felt the combined agenda was too ambitious to be credible. Of all the elements, a plurality of participants ranked preschool as the most important.

Californians want all young children to succeed. To develop a more detailed understanding of public attitudes toward preschool specifically, First 5 California commissioned a second survey, conducted by Hart Research Associates in the fall of 2002 with 1,400 randomly selected respondents in English and Spanish. Although early childhood was again not uppermost in people's thoughts—respondents were more aware of issues related to health care, taxes and K-12 education—respondents agreed that our K-12 system is out-of-date and out-of-sync with working households, and that we are not taking advantage of what we know about child development. Seventy-seven percent of all respondents agreed that "making sure that young children in California start kindergarten ready to do their best in school" should be a high priority for the state, on par with increasing access to health care and improving the quality of public schools. While a majority of all groups agreed with the statement, agreement was highest of all among low-income respondents, parents of young children and non-white respondents.

Across the entire state, respondents were equally focused on children's health care, preschool, nutrition and high-quality child care as the most important issues related to school readiness, but a majority of parents with children under age 5 think the state is not doing enough to provide access to quality pre-kindergarten experiences. Consistent with earlier findings on the perceived importance of preschool for a successful education, respondents have positive impressions of preschool, believing it will make the existing K-12 system more successful by helping children to feel more self-confident and positive about learning, which they believe will lead, in turn, to better reading in third grade and higher achievement throughout the K-12 years. Among African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans, the benefit of enhanced self-confidence in school is especially important. Respondents placed less importance on, or were less aware of, other long-term benefits of preschool such as higher graduation rates, lower rates of juvenile crime and better job prospects.

Californians believe the state should level the educational playing field.

Echoing concerns about equity in earlier studies, a majority of respondents identified access to preschool as a serious or very serious problem for both low-income and working-class families with incomes up to \$40,000. In view of this perception, 70 percent of respondents think universal access to pre-kindergarten would create a more level playing field. When asked whether the school system should be changed to start at age 4 or younger, nearly half agree. Younger respondents are the most strongly in favor of an early start. At the same time, 79 percent of all respondents say the state should be involved in funding preschool in some way and 50 percent say it should be available to all children on a voluntary basis, regardless of income. Among Latinos, English-speaking respondents are more supportive than their Spanish-speaking counterparts, but still nearly half are in support. It is notable that these significant levels of support are not restricted to parents of young children. Nearly half of non-parents also support the idea of voluntary Preschool for All.

Fostering a Greater Understanding of the Importance of Preschool

These findings make clear that there is significant support for the idea of making access to preschool for every young Californian a reality. Parents and the pub-

lic already recognize and value many of preschool's near-term benefits for children and they also make strong connections between children's early learning and the success of the K-12 system as a whole.

As yet, though supportive of early learning and equal opportunity, the public expresses little active demand for sweeping policy changes. Though many are open to re-thinking education in the more developmentally appropriate "birth to university" framework reflected in the Master Plan for Education, there is still work to be done to build strong public support for a publicly-funded system. And individual parents concerned about their own child's early learning opportunities may not yet fully recognize that there can be a legitimate societal solution to what many have considered to be a private family matter.

The Public Education Campaign

To help individual parents further understand the importance of preschool for their own children, First 5 California has launched an advertising campaign, with television, radio and print ads running in markets throughout the state. The campaign aims to dramatically increase the number of people who understand the benefits of voluntary Preschool for All, to increase the number of people who view preschool as the

start of the formal educational continuum and to increase perceptions of preschool as "school." Though preschool is voluntary, it should be perceived as a routine part of the education process, just as kindergarten is now perceived.

Appealing to parents and a general audience, the ads build on themes that emerged from First 5 Cali-

fornia's public opinion research. "Grow-



"Better Chance"



"When you sent me to preschool, you didn't know what they know now. That it made me more confident...more likely to go to college. Even more likely to graduate and get a good job. You only knew that preschool made me happy. Preschool gave me a better chance in life. And that's all you ever wanted. What do I want? I want you to know that I—we—appreciate it."

ing Down” shows a young man’s development in reverse, from a college student running backward through high school, elementary and preschool, underscoring how success at each stage has been built on the foundation of what came before, “So if a child goes to preschool, which prepares him for kindergarten, he’ll do better his entire life.” A second ad shows a diverse group of young children and asks “What If?” What if each of them could gain the self-confidence and skills that preschool gives, and reap the resulting benefits? In testing these ads with both English- and Spanish-speaking viewers, the ads produced a significant increase in the number of people who felt that it is important for children to attend preschool before kindergarten. Similarly, the ads produced a further decrease in agreement with the statement that preschool does not have long-term educational value.

Currently, two new ads, “I Want” and “Better Chance,” are running in media markets throughout the state, reinforcing the message that children who attend preschool are more likely to be happier and successful in school and in life. Future ads will continue to educate Californians about the benefits of preschool.

An Even Broader Vision for the Future

By doing what it takes to give all our children a nurturing, stimulating and culturally appropriate preschool experience, we will go a long way toward ensuring that every young Californian can succeed in school and in life. As the research on early childhood makes clear and as adult Californians increasingly agree, preschool is a critically important part of a comprehensive agenda for children, offering major benefits for children and a key near-term opportunity for public action. Even as we press forward on Preschool for All, First 5 California is staying focused on the other aspects of our holistic vision for young children. Along with the preschool campaign and our other ongoing initiatives for young children, over the next 10 years First 5 California also plans to mount major efforts to promote universal access to health care for all young children and to ensure that every low-performing school in the state offers its incoming children and families comprehensive healthy development and early learning support, starting at birth, through School Readiness Centers.

Like the creation of universal kindergarten 100 years ago, Preschool for All represents a historic move to extend our public education system down into the younger years, helping to give all our children the strongest possible start in learning and in life. If the movement succeeds, as a society we will be making a powerful statement about our commitment to equity and opportunity for all of our children. ■

Provisions of the New Master Plan for Education Moving through the Legislature: Bill Carries Key Elements on Early Childhood

Assembly Bill 56, now in the Assembly Ways and Means Committee, would bring into law several of the key initiatives for young children that are included in the state’s visionary Master Plan for Education. The bill, introduced by Assembly members Steinberg, Chan, Daucher and Liu establishes legislative intent to provide:

- Voluntary access to universal preschool education for all children 3- and 4-years-old by 2014 through programs that offer developmentally appropriate group experiences and curricula and that are seamlessly integrated into the K-12 system.

- School Readiness Centers and programs at or near all low-performing schools, building on the School Readiness Initiative established by First 5 California, to give families access to essential services to meet young children’s developmental needs.

- The phase-in of compulsory full-day kindergarten for all children, beginning immediately with high-risk communities associated with low-performing schools and annually expanding thereafter to include all California children.

- By 2004, the full phase-in of universal health and developmental screenings and assessments for all children age 5 or younger, beginning at birth, starting with high-risk communities and linked to School Readiness Centers so that children with physical disabilities, developmental delays, or extraordinary learning needs will receive early intervention.

The bill’s authors plan to craft additional programmatic and fiscal details as the measure progresses in the next legislative session.

New Report Highlights Disparities in Children's Health Status That Affect Development

Many of the groundbreaking programs First 5 California has supported are based in part on the theory that important social goals and health outcomes are determined in early childhood. A healthy birth, experiences that support and nurture physical, emotional, social and cognitive development and early care and education all impact a child's lifelong learning potential.

To gather more information about the state of California's young children, First 5 California commissioned the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research and the Center for Healthier Children, Families and Communities to prepare *The Health of Young Children in California*. This report, based on analyses of data from the 2001 California Health Interview Survey (CHIS)¹, provides new population-based information on many health, early care and education and family support issues relevant to advocates and providers in the child development field.

What the CHIS Survey Tells Us

The Health of Young Children in California highlights differences in health outcomes, health access, health and developmental risk and health-promoting behaviors that are often associated with a family's economic circumstances, as well as a child's ethnicity, place of residence and immigration status.

Disparities in Health Status and Well-Being

While nearly three-quarters of all children in California are in excellent or very good health, there are substantial disparities across racial and ethnic groups. African American children have more than double the reported rates of disability than Non-Latino white children, Latino children and



Asian/Pacific-Islander children. Much of this difference in health status appears to be associated with the negative impact of poverty.

Disparities in Childhood Disability

About 3.7 percent of young children in California have a disability that limits the kind of play and interactions they have with other children and adults. The rates of disability nearly double after school entry. CHIS data reveal that many young children have unrecognized disabilities that become evident once they start school. Because

these children are not identified early enough, they do not benefit from interventions that could improve their long-term cognitive and physical development. In addition, the data show that child health providers are not conducting adequate developmental assessments. This may be due to lack of training and expertise or lack of familiarity with appropriate and effective assessment tools.

Asthma Prevalence and Impact

Activity limitations due to asthma can be a considerable barrier to a young child's social and intellectual development, yet an astonishing one in five young African American children in California have been diagnosed with asthma. This disparity points to the need to improve access to and the quality of health care for this population.

Access to Health Insurance

In 2001, there were 202,000 children ages 0 to 5 who were not insured. Given that most children are eligible for health insurance coverage through either Medi-Cal or the Healthy Families program, this should not be the case. Among the insured young children in California, 4.3 percent (about 124,000 children) lacked health coverage at some time in the past year. In total, 11 percent of young children are either uninsured or had a gap in health coverage in the past year. CHIS data show that most parents of children who are eligible but not enrolled in these programs do not know about the program or that their child would qualify.

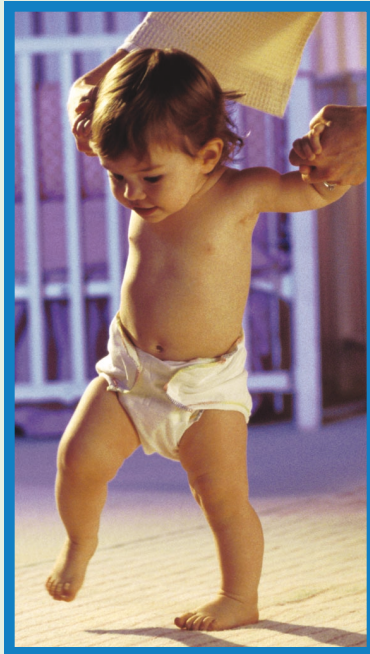
Geographic Disparities in Access to Health Care: Barriers for Rural Children

Children living in rural areas have insufficient access to health care and also suffer from poorer health status. Children in rural areas are more than twice as likely as chil-

dren living in suburbs to be uninsured and have twice the rate of any other group of children in experiencing gaps in coverage. In addition, children in rural areas of California are more likely to delay or forego needed health care.

Access to Dental Care: Gaps in Care and Coverage

Good oral health is important because the infection or pain associated with dental caries and disease can lead to impaired speech development, absence from preschool (limiting social development), inability to concentrate and, in turn, lowered self-esteem and other psychosocial problems. CHIS data show that just over half of all children 2- to 5-years-old have ever received dental care. In addition, while most young children in California (93 percent) have health insurance only 76 percent have dental insurance.



Implications and Uses of CHIS Data for First 5 California

The Health of Young Children in California and the CHIS data on health outcomes, health access, health and developmental risks and health-promoting behaviors shine a light on the fact that the state's youngest children could be healthier, have better access to health services and receive health promotion and preventive services that would boost their chances of succeeding in school and in life. The data also show that many children in California are not receiving the early childhood services they need.

First 5 California is already addressing these gaps in service delivery by funding programs that focus on

voluntary Preschool for All, access to health and dental health care and creating stronger linkages to help identify children with special needs and disabilities. For First 5 California, as well as for policymakers and others who work in early childhood development, the CHIS data will be invaluable for benchmarking, setting goals and analyzing trends.

Looking to the future, the CHIS survey will provide up-to-date and important information on the health of young children in California. By incorporating new content and updating data, the biannual CHIS report will be vital to the planning and evaluation of early childhood initiatives in California. As a population-based study guiding the planning of early childhood development programs, the CHIS survey has the potential to help all young children in California achieve better health and developmental outcomes and secure a foundation for future success and well-being.

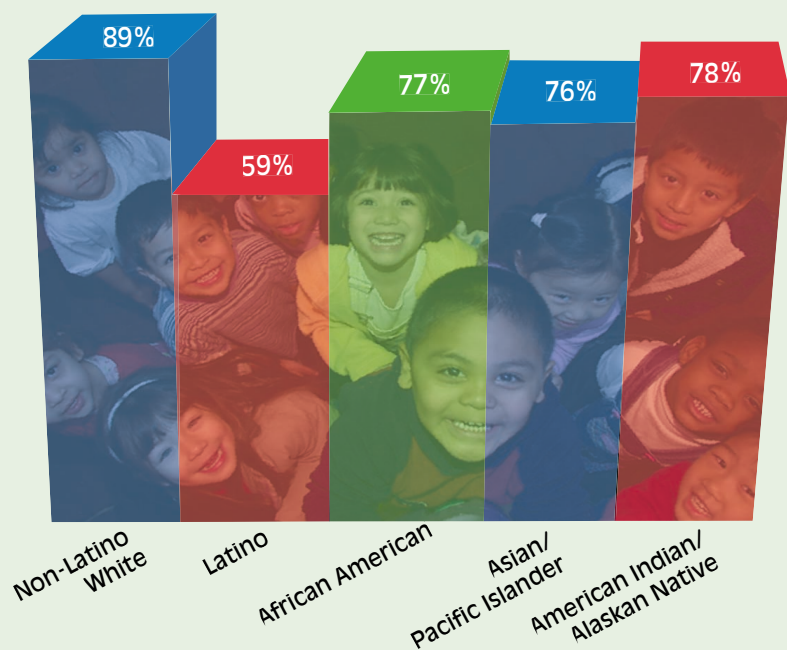
For a copy of the full report, please visit www.healthpolicy.ucla.edu ■

1. The CHIS 2001 survey includes a sample of over 55,000 households randomly selected through a random-digit-dial (RDD) telephone survey. Questionnaires were translated and administered in five languages in addition to English. This report provides results for the 4,733 children age 0 to 5 years, weighted to the population of young children in California.

Promoting Early Literacy and School Readiness: Disparities in Reading with Young Children

Reading to their young children is an essential activity that focuses the parents' attention on the child and helps with parent-child attachment. CHIS shows that only 43.6 percent of parents of children ages 0 to 5 say that someone in the household reads to the child at least seven times in a typical week. Overall, parents in California are reading less than parents nationally. There are large disparities in reading by income, race/ethnicity and maternal education, indicating that some children are at significantly higher risk of not being ready for school. Only about one-third of children ages 1 to 4 in households below 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) are read to daily, compared with two-thirds of children in households above 300 percent FPL. Disparities by race/ethnicity are also substantial.

California Children Ages 0 to 5 in Excellent or Very Good Health by Race/Ethnicity



A crowd of education, political and community leaders, parents and children gathered to witness this milestone event. Standing at a podium with children off to the side playing with building blocks, puzzles and picture books, Reiner announced an investment of \$100 million to ensure that within the next decade, every 3- and 4-year-old in California will have the opportunity to attend free voluntary preschool programs regardless of income and residency status.

"When we say preschool for all, we mean preschool for all. This investment will demonstrate how preschool builds brighter futures for kids—and for all of California," said Reiner. "If we're going to overhaul the education system, preschool has to be a part of that."

The Preschool for All announcement proves critical in light of the latest key findings by the 2001 California Health Interview Survey (CHIS) that many preschool-age children spend no time in structured preschool settings and large disparities exist in preschool attendance among California's ethnic populations.



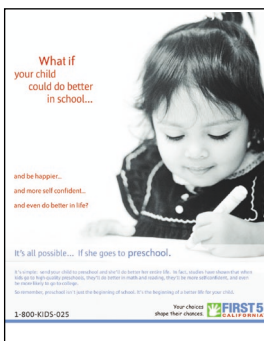
AP Photo/Rich Pedroncelli

Overall, CHIS shows that only 22.4 percent of preschool-age children (3 to 5 years) are in a preschool program such as Head Start, preschool or nursery school.

The initial \$100 million will be leveraged with county First 5 funds and will go toward demonstration projects and building the work-

force of preschool teachers. The money will be appropriated over the next five to seven years. In addition to First 5 San Mateo County, First 5 LA and First 5 Alpine have also moved forward with plans to develop universal preschool programs. ■

Child Development Resources at First 5 Clearinghouse



Nutrition, prenatal care, discipline, quality child care and the harmful effects of secondhand smoke are all topics covered in the early childhood development materials available at the First 5 Clearinghouse. Ideal for parents and caregivers of young children, Clearinghouse products are low-cost and easy-to-read. Brochures, posters, videos and tip sheets come in multiple languages. First 5 Clearinghouse products are available to California-based agencies and residents.

First 5 Clearinghouse products can be ordered in three ways:
by phone at 1-800-245-1512;
by fax at 831-439-9184;
and online at www.First5Clearinghouse.org.
Call the toll-free line to request a free catalog.



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will provide practical guidance at the county, city and school district level to help localities deliver on the growing public support for statewide Preschool for All. In addition, an integrated communication strategy sponsored by First 5 California will educate parents and caregivers about the importance of access to quality preschool opportunities.

While there will be fiscal, logistic and practical challenges on the way to making Preschool for All a reality in California, momentum is building here and elsewhere in the country. This conference vividly demonstrated that Californians are in good company as policymakers and parents across the United States learn about the importance of access to quality preschool.

For more information about the Preschool for All Summit, the proceedings report is now available at www.cfc.ca.gov/breaking.htm. ■

First 5 California - Facts at a Glance

What is the California Children and Families Act?

In November 1998, voters passed Proposition 10, an initiative that added a 50 cent-per-pack tax on cigarettes to fund education, health, child care and other programs to promote early childhood development, from prenatal to age 5. The California Children and Families Act, which was created through the passage of Prop. 10, was designed to address the lack of public funding and support for early childhood development in the wake of a growing body of scientific evidence indicating the emotional, physical, social and developmental environment to which children are exposed has a profound impact on their ability to reach their greatest potential in school and in life.

How does it work?

First 5 California/Children and Families Commission at the state level and California's 58 County Commissions are carrying out the work of the initiative.

First 5 California is the leadership agency and statewide coordinator for the California Children and Families Act. First 5 California provides oversight, training and assistance to the County Commissions and statewide education on the importance of early childhood development. In addition, 20 percent of the overall revenue is administered by First 5 California to conduct research and evaluation on the best policies and practices for young children; to develop education, infrastructure and training programs for parents, child care providers and other professionals; to conduct broad, media-based public education campaigns; and to offer support and technical assistance to County Commissions.

The bulk of the funds, 80 percent, go directly to the County Commissions. The County Commissions must develop strategic plans consistent with First 5 California guidelines on funding local child development programs and services but they also have maximum flexibility in tailoring funding and programs to local needs. Some First 5 California requirements for County

Commissions include obtaining broad public input and submitting audits on spending.

The California Children and Families Act mandates that the State and County Commissions form at least one advisory committee to provide expertise and support. First 5 California has established an Advisory Committee on Diversity, charged with helping to ensure that statewide programs meet the needs of California's ethnically, linguistically and culturally diverse population and children with special needs and disabilities.

How are Commissioners chosen?

First 5 California's Commission is comprised of seven members appointed by the Governor, the Speaker of the Assembly and the Senate Rules Committee. The Secretary for Education and the Secretary of the Health and Human Services Agency also serve as ex-officio members. At the local level, each county Board of Supervisors appoints a five to nine member Commission to include a member of the Board of Supervisors and two members from among those who manage county functions (e.g., behavioral health services, social services, or tobacco prevention and treatment services). The remaining members can be drawn from county functions or organizations that work in the early childhood development arena. ■

The California Children and Families Commission has adopted "First 5 California" as its new overarching school readiness identity. We believe that the name First 5 California conveys the importance of the first five years of life, the period of time during which a child's brain develops most dramatically. The new name will be used in all Commission public education efforts, on any printed materials developed and, over time, may become the primary identity of the organization.

CALIFORNIA CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMISSION

Commissioners:

Dr. Alice Walker Duff is co-founder and executive director of Crystal Stairs, Inc. and has worked in the education and child care fields for over three decades. She also serves on the board of the Center for the Child Care Work Force.

Elizabeth Rice Grossman is a retired investment professional committed to philanthropy and children's issues. She serves as a member of the Juvenile Probation Commission in the City and County of San Francisco, is on the Board of Directors for The Omega Boys Club and manages two foundations with her family.

Sandra Gutierrez, an expert in the development of child care services, is currently the California project director for Child Care Programs at The Enterprise Foundation. Previously, she served as project coordinator for the Child Care Law Project.

Eliseo Medina serves as international executive vice president at SEIU and was the first Mexican American elected to a top leadership post. He previously served as president of SEIU's California State Council and as executive director of SEIU Local 2026.

Rob Reiner, a filmmaker and activist for infants and young children, serves as the chair of the Commission after devoting substantial time and resources to the passage of Proposition 10 as part of his crusade to shift the national consciousness to value early childhood development.

Margaret Taylor has served as director of health services for San Mateo County since 1985 and was a founding member of the Medi-Cal managed care plan in San Mateo. She has 30 years of experience working to enhance services for children and families.

Louis A. Vismara, M.D., is a founding member of the M.I.N.D. Institute at UC Davis. The interdisciplinary organization investigates and provides resources for a wide range of neurodevelopment disorders, from autism to learning disabilities. He also serves as a consultant to State Senator John Burton.

Ex-Officio Members:

Grantland Johnson, Secretary of the California Health and Human Services Agency (CHHS), has appointed Assistant Secretary of Programs and Fiscal Affairs for CHHS, Genie Chough, to serve on the Commission in his place. Previously, Ms. Chough served as Assistant Director of the Domestic Policy Council for the White House focusing on foster care, child welfare and health care issues.

Kerry Mazzoni, as Governor Davis' Secretary for Education, has appointed Assistant Secretary for Education, Theresa Garcia, to serve on the Commission in her place. Ms. Garcia brings a strong background in education issues and policy and program analysis to her post. She currently directs the Office's broad range of policy activities related to early childhood and K-12 education.

Staff: Jane I. Henderson, Ph.D., Executive Director Joe P. Munso, Chief Deputy Director

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